

**[James E. Twadell]**

W9627

Beliefs and customs — life histories

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Title Oregon Folklore studies

Informant: James E. Twadell [Begins: I'm not a pioneer...

Place of origin Oregon Date 5/15/39

Project worker Manly M. Banister

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Manly M. Banister Date May 15, 1939

Address 2071 SW Park Avenue

Subject Folklore

Name and address of informant Mr. James E. Twadell

337 SE 79th Ave

Date and time of interview May 12. morning and early afternoon

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Place of interview 337 SE 79th Ave

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Howard Corning; Elks Building

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None

Description of room, house, surroundings; etc. The house is situated on the west side of 79th Avenue, with a hedge between sidewalk and large yard. It is an old house, though neat, surrounded with outhouses for chickens, wood, tools, etc. There is considerable garden space, many flowers, trees, etc.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant
10. Other points gained in interview

1. Father was John Twadell, Scotch-Irish and Welsh. Born near Terre Haute, Indiana. Mother was Adeline Griswol, of French blood, born and raised in France.

2. Born near Princeton, in Mercer County, Missouri, March 15, 1853.

3. Was married in 1878 in Linn County to Marie Hare, full-blooded English. Have one son born in 1879. Now past sixty.

4. Came to Grande Ronde Valley Sept. 19, 1865. In 1871 moved to Umatilla County in the Walla Walla Valley. Lived there five years and moved to Linn County, near Lebanon. Stayed there until 1903, then moved to Portland and has been here since.

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5. Very little. Got about "one-third the way through the arithmentic."
6. Worked with pack train in eastern Oregon. Did labor in the valley, and then farmed. 2 7. Has no special skills or interests.
8. No community or religious activities.
9. Tall, gnarled, blind in one eye. Has a large, handle-bar mustache. Talks plainly and clearly and recollects very well.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Manly M. Banister Date May 15, 1939

Address 2071 SW Park Avenue

Subject Folklore

Name and address of informant Mr. James E. Twadell

337 SE 79th Ave

Text:

I'm not a pioneer, but I come to this country in pretty early days, all right. I landed in the Grande Ronde Valley the nineteenth of September, 1865. I crossed the plains with my

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parents with an ox-team, starting from Missouri, on May 3rd, 1865, the year the Civil War closed. I stayed there until 1871 when I moved with my parents to Umatilla county. I was twelve years old then, and I went to work on a pack train that ran from Umatilla Landing to Boise, Idaho, and worked for the freighter for two years. They charged twenty-five cents a pound for packing freight. It was high, all right, but everyone had money in them days. Wages was ten dollars a day for a man with a team and five dollars a day for a single hand. The mixes were going full blast at the time and gold dust was plentiful. There wasn't no real money to be seen, hardly...just gold.

My job with the train was to ride the bell pony and help the cook with his chores when we camped. The bell pony was a pony that walked along ahead of the train of pack mules. The usual custom was for a boy to ride the bell pony, and that's how come I had the job. There was a little bell like a sheep bell tied to the pony's neck, and the mules followed the sound of that bell wherever it went. There were regular camping places along the route and we tried to make one of them each night, but sometimes we just camped wherever night overtook us. Pendleton and La Grande were the only towns in a stretch of four hundred miles there, so there wasn't much staying in town for us.

Well, I finally left there in the fall of '76 and went to the Willamette Valley and settled near Lebanon in Linn County. I worked at everything there...just common labor, but the last six years I put in farming until I came to Portland in 1903.

I used to sing a great deal when I was younger but darn me if I can remember anything about the songs except the names of them. It was just after the War, and I remember there was a lot of war songs we used to sing. There was "The Last Charge at Fredericksburg", "The Battle of Shiloh," and "Marching Through Georgia". One local song I remember which everybody used to sing was called "McAfee's Confession." McAfee murdered a man and was hung for it, but while he was waiting in jail at Portland he wrote this song. (Ed. This statement is subject to further inquiry.)

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As for dances, they had different kinds of waltzes and polkas. The Rye Waltz was an awfully fine dance. Then there was the Military Schottische—my wife and I took a good many prizes doing that one. Then the Polka Schottische, the Glide Polka, the Heel and Toe Polka, the Old Square Schottische which was a three-step. We had fiddles and drums for music, usually.

I remember one dance in Waterloo when there was 96 couples on the floor at one time. That was 24 sets. I called for a good many dances then, but I can't remember a single call now. In the thirty-five years I've been in Portland, I've called at only one dance and that was shortly after I come here.

I was at the first Fourth of July Celebration ever held in the Grande Ronde Valley. That was at Uniontown in 1867, located in the south end of the 3 valley, near the canyon which cuts through the mountain there going to Baker. I saw all this stuff, mind you, but you probably won't believe me, because they never have nothing like it nowadays. They had the celebration in a beautiful grove, where they had erected three tables each three feet wide and a hundred yards long. The stuff was cooked by every one in the valley and brought there, and every one came and ate at no charge, whether he had contributed or not. And when the plates were empty, they were all refilled until everyone had enough. Underneath the tables ever so often was a big candy bucket set, a sort of tub like affair full of candy. And then they had a big parade. Music was furnished by tenor and bass drums and bugles. There were quite a few ex-soldiers there...maybe a company of about a hundred in the parade. Of course, it was shortly after the war, and not so many had come then as there were later.

The only pants men wore in them days was overalls just like they wear now, only they were white instead of blue and cost \$2.50 a pair. And the menfolks all wore boots—you hardly saw a pair of shoes in them days at all.

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I lived up there eleven years all told and saw six killings. Four men shot and two hung—the last two for killing a man and civil law took care of them. Of course there were lots more killings, but none that I saw with my own eyes. I recall there was a man name of Reed killed another man in a butcher shop. I was standing in the doorway at the time. He got away and killed another man later in Linn County when I was there. They caught him that time and hung him.

Then there was a fellow named Martin that killed a Dutchman. The Dutchman had been working for Martin and Martin owed him some wages. Well, the Dutchman asked for his money, and Martin said he didn't have it, and got nasty with the Dutchman and said something or other—I don't know what—and the 4 Dutchman slapped him. That angered the old man and he drew himself up straight and told the Dutchman, "I'll kill you before the sun sets tonight." Then he turned around and walked away. He got on his horse and rode to Uniontown and there he began to liquor up.

Now there was a little store down at Hendershott's Point a little ways away, and the folks sent me down with same eggs to get coffee. While I was at the store, a pack train came in and camped down by the creek where it bends around the point. Of course, the sight of a pack train was a great sight to me as it was to all the folks who had just come from the east. We had never seen nothing like it before.

This Dutchman was there at the store, and he took my arm and said, "Come on, kid, let's go down and see the pack train."

So we went down there and I sat down on a box or a chunk of wood or something, and the Dutchman he squatted alongside and began to talk with one of the packers. I don't know what we were talking about...just passing the time of day, or talking about the pack train or something. Then the Dutchman looked up and saw old Martin coming down the trail. You could see he was drunk the way he staggered along over the rough ground.

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"There comes my boss now," said the Dutchman. "He made me mad this morning and I slapped his face; then he threatened to kill me before sunset tonight. "The Dutchman kind of laughed, because evidently he wasn't afraid of the old man and didn't think he would carry out his threat.

The old man come on down and walked up to the Dutchman squatting there. The Dutchman didn't stand up, and Martin sort of swayed as he stood there, looking down at him, and there was a mean look on the old man's face, and his eyes was bloodshot with the whiskey he had drunk. 5 "Know what I told you this morning?" he said.

"Yes, I do," said the Dutchman, and grinned up at him.

The old man didn't say another word but drew his gun then and there shot him before he could move. The ball struck the Dutchman just below the left collar bone and come out above the right hip. Martin was sent to the penitentiary for life.

Then there was another man, who lived in the cove where I did, shot and killed his brother-in-law over a bottle of whiskey. Cawhorn was the name of the man that was killed, but I didn't see any of the doings.

The living of the people then was mainly vegetables and beef. There was no fruit raised there. We had lots of beef and plenty of pork. Bacon was \$1 a pound. Flour was \$10 a hundred. Butter was \$1 a pound. Eggs \$1 a dozen. Potatoes \$3 a bushel. There was some barter went on, mostly everything was paid for in gold dust. The packers and freighters carried their gold scales with them, but ordinary folks, farmers and such like, didn't need to, on account of the folks at the store had scales, and that's where the farmers mostly got rid of their stuff. Fifty pounds of flour in the gold mines near Boise was worth \$50.

A man working in the mines those days got paid an ounce of gold per day for his labor. That was sixteen dollars. But that was just in the mines—I've already told you what the

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wages were in the valley for hired hands. In the valley it cost the farmers ten cents a bushel to get their wheat threshed and seven cents for a bushel of oats. The farmers got \$3 a bushel for their wheat but I don't know what oats brought.

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Mr. J. E. Twadell

Comment:

Mr. Twadell is quite willing to talk at any time. He takes pleasure in reminiscing, and he feels sure that later he will think of much more because this interview has set his mind to working on things he had let be forgotten. In this worker's opinion, it will pay to interview him again at some time shortly in the future, allowing a reasonable interval for him to summon his recollections.